

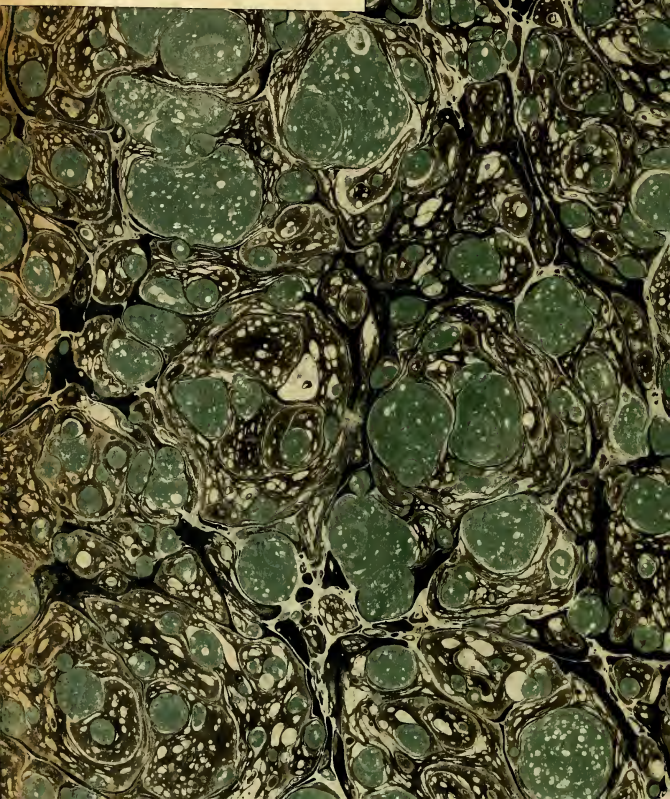


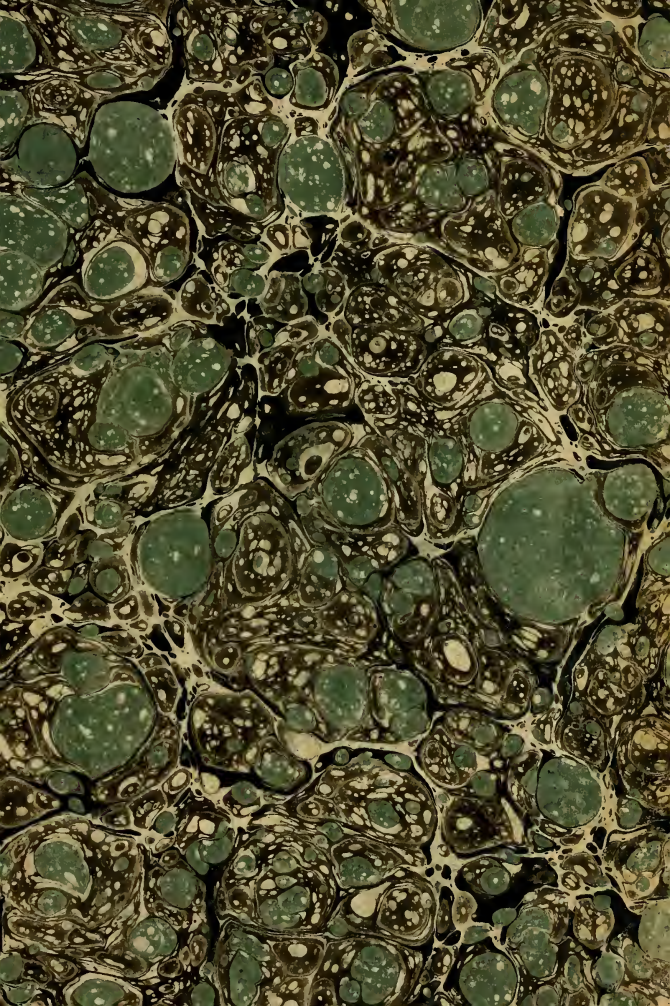
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH,
OR
MEMOIR,
OF
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL
PATRICK FERGUSON:

ORIGINALLY INTENDED FOR THE
British Encyclopædia.

BY
ADAM FERGUSON, L.L.D.

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC; ESSAY ON
CIVIL SOCIETY; PRINCIPLES OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY,
&c. &c. &c.

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The following Biographical Sketch, or Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson, was written by Dr Ferguson, for the purpose of being published in the Encyclopædia Britannica ; but being considered by the Editor as too long for that work, and the Doctor declining to abridge it, it was not inserted. A few copies are now printed from the original sketch.



FERGUSON, LIEUTENANT-COLONEL PATRICK,
was killed in the action at King's Mountain, South
Carolina, 7th October 1780. The esteem and affec-
tion of his brother officers dictated the following
Epitaph, which was inserted in the New York
Gazette of 14th of February 1781 :

IF AN ARDENT THIRST FOR MILITARY FAME,
A SOCIAL AND BENEVOLENT HEART,
AN UNCOMMON GENIUS,
A MIND GLOWING WITH PATRIOTIC FIRE,
REPLETE WITH USEFUL KNOWLEDGE,
AND CAPABLE
OF PERSEVERING UNDER DIFFICULTIES
WHERE GLORY WAS IN VIEW,
CLAIM OUR ADMIRATION ;
THE FATE OF
MAJOR PATRICK FERGUSON*,
WHO POSSESSED THESE AND OTHER VIRTUES
IN AN EMINENT DEGREE,
AND WHO FELL
WARRING AGAINST DISCORD,
IRRESISTIBLY
CLAIMS OUR TEARS.

* Major FERGUSON was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel some
time before his death ;—a circumstance which seems to have been unknown to
his brother officers at *New York*.

SUPERIOR military genius is but rare among the gifts of nature ; and of those who are endowed with it, many are stopt short in the early stages of a profession of which they are forward to incur the dangers. Such as survive those dangers, and attain to eminent stations in the service of their country, are secure of their fame. For those who fall prematurely it is but fair, as often as they can be distinguished, to affix to their memory the marks of honour they covet, and for which the votaries of profit will not surely contend with them.

If the young man who is the subject of the present article had escaped the dangers to which he was so often exposed, it is probable that the annals of his country would have spoken more fully for him.

He was second son of JAMES FERGUSON, Esq. of Pitfour, one of the Senators of the College of Justice, and Lords Commissioners of Justiciary in Scotland, by ANNE MURRAY, daughter of ALEXANDER Lord ELIBANK ; and, with this descent, fortunately united in his own character, the calm judgment and exalted abilities of his father, with the vivacity and genius of his mother's family.

Those who associate ferocity with the military character, will hardly believe in what degree a person so fond of the military life, was humane and compassionate to his enemies, as well as affectionate and generous in his friendships. But these dispositions, however in appearance little suited to war, are the appurtenances of great courage; and bring along with them a passion for scenes of hardship and danger, in which magnanimity, in all its exertions, has the free'st scope.

Whatever circumstances there may have been to be regretted, in the origin and progress of a war between Great Britain and her revolted colonies, there never was any service in which the officers of the British army appeared to more advantage. Diligent, obedient, indefatigable, and humane as well as brave, they generally prevailed in the fortune of arms, and moved through the streets, villages and farms of those who were in arms against them, as in the country of a friend; a *general* character we are happy to prefix to the particulars which occur to be mentioned, relating to the person who is the subject of this article.

He was born in the year 1744; and, having early chosen the life of a soldier, was sent to finish his

education at a military academy in London, where he acquired the elements of fortification, gunnery, and other arts subservient to his intended profession. Of these he afterwards pursued the study in real situations—in action as well as on paper; and was sagacious, original, and inventive in the application of expedients to actual service.

His first commission was purchased for him at the age of fourteen, in the Royal North British Dragoons; and he gave, while yet a boy, many striking proofs of sensibility to the military character, and of his spirit in supporting it. Of these, which were indeed habitual to him, it may not be improper to mention two instances; one in particular, in Germany, when, not having completed his 16th year, being on horseback a few miles in front of the army, with another young officer of the same regiment, (Sir JOHN MITCHELL,) they fell in with a party of the enemies' hussars, and, finding it necessary to retire, were pursued. FERGUSON, in passing a ditch, dropped one of his pistols; but thinking it improper for an officer to return to camp with the loss of any of his arms, he re-leaped the ditch in the face of the enemy, and recovered his pistol. They halted, imputing probably his confidence to some support which he saw at hand, al-

lowed him to repass the ditch, join his companion, and regain their camp undisturbed.

The other happened at Paris some years after, with an officer in the French service, who spoke reproachfully in his presence of the British nation. This insult he not only resented on the spot, but surprised his antagonist next morning with a visit before he was out of bed. "This is well, young man," said the other: "I have paid such visits,— seldom received them; but it is fair to tell you that I am reputed one of the best swordsmen in France."—"That is not the question now," said FERGUSON: "You are in my debt, let us find a fit place to settle our accounts." They accordingly went to the Boulevards together; FERGUSON considering how he might deprive this swordsman of the advantage of his superior skill, and the other regarding with security and contempt so young an antagonist. As soon as they had drawn, FERGUSON rushed within his adversary's point, seized the hilt of his sword, and in the scuffle was so fortunate as to get possession of it. "You are a brave fellow," said the other; "and I shall certainly do you justice whenever our affair is mentioned."

He had scarcely finished his first campaign, when he was disabled by sickness; and having been for some months confined under the care of the physicians and surgeons of the army*, was sent home when in a condition to be removed. His words, in a letter to his friend General WATSON, some time after, are as follows: "I am now entirely recovered, and might serve the next campaign with ease, had not the fears of my parents prompted them to apply for an order for my joining the light-troop; by which means I am deprived, for these many years to come, of the only chance of getting a little insight into my profession."

Being much at home from the year 1762 to the year 1768, he entered warmly into the question which was then agitated relating to the extension of the militia laws to Scotland. He saw no difficulty in combining the character of a soldier with that of a citizen, so far as was necessary for the defence of a country in which citizens enjoy such invaluable privileges; and some of the ablest and most intelligent publications which appeared in the public prints of the time, were of his writing.

* The late Dr ARMSTRONG, author of the celebrated poem of the Art of Preserving Health, &c. was then physician to the British forces in Germany, and formed upon that occasion the warmest friendship and affection for young Cornet FERGUSON, which continued to his death.

In 1768 a company was purchased for him in the 70th regiment of foot, then in the West Indies, and he soon after joined that part of it which was in Tobago, where he was of great service in quelling very formidable insurrections of the negroes ; but after much distress in this situation from bad health, he went to North America, and returned to Great Britain in 1774, where he remained about two years.

During this interval a dispute with the North American colonies was verging to a civil war ; and the boasted skill of the Americans in the use of the rifle, was held out as an object of terror to the British troops, whom it was said the American marksman could unofficer by lodging his ball from a distance, within the compass of the smallest mark.

These rumours set FERGUSON's invention to work on a new species of rifle, which he could load at the breech without the use of a rammer, and in such quick repetition as to fire seven times in a minute. The riflemen, in the meantime, might be stretched at full length on the ground, so as to have the cover of a parapet behind even a consolidated mole-hill, or the least inequality of the earth's surface.

The first exhibition of this invention was made before Lord TOWNSEND, then master-general of the ordnance.* It was afterwards practised by some private men of the Guards at Windsor, that the King might have an opportunity of seeing its effects. When his Majesty was pleased to give orders for that purpose, a few men who had learned the use of the rifle were brought to perform in his presence, but, being overawed, in their first attempts shot wide of the mark : “ They would not,” said

* The following account of this exhibition will be found in the *Chronicle* of the *Annual Register* for 1776, of date the 1st of June.

“ Some experiments were tried at Woolwich before Lord Viscount TOWNSHEND, Lord AMHERST, Generals HERVEY and DESAGUILIERS, and a number of other officers, with a rifle gun, upon a new construction, by Captain FERGUSON of the 70th regiment ; when that gentleman, under the disadvantages of a heavy rain and a high wind, performed the following four things, none of which had ever before been accomplished with any other small arms. 1st, He fired during four or five minutes at a target, at 200 yards distance, at the rate of four shots each minute. 2dly, He fired six shots in one minute. 3dly, He fired four times per minute, advancing at the same time at the rate of four miles in the hour. 4thly, He poured a bottle of water into the pan and barrel of the piece when loaded, so as to wet every grain of the powder, and in less than half a minute fired with her as well as ever, without extracting the ball. He also hit the bull’s eye at 100 yards, lying with his back on the ground ; and, notwithstanding the unequalness of the wind and wetness of the weather, he only missed the target three times during the whole course of the experiments. The captain has since taken out a patent for the said improvements.”

the captain, "be so embarrassed in presence of
" your Majesty's enemies."

FERGUSON then took a rifle himself; and of nine shots which he fired at the distance of a hundred yards, put five balls into the bull's-eye of the target, and four within as many inches of it. Three of these shots were fired as he lay on his back, the other six standing erect. Being asked how often he could load and fire in a minute, he said seven times; but added pleasantly, that he would not undertake in that time to knock down above five of his Majesty's enemies. The recollection of which he was capable in the most arduous situations, gave him at all times the ease of an experienced courtier.

He wished to be employed in the armaments which were then preparing for the continent of North America, and was accordingly indulged with instructions to the Commander-in-chief, to have a corps of volunteers draughted from the regiments on the American service, to have them armed in his own way, and put under his command.

This commission was agreeable to him, chiefly because it gave him a species of separate command, and left him to conduct a corps which was formed

upon a principle different from that of the rest of the army. He gave a signal specimen of its services at the battle of Brandywine, when, being advanced in the front of the column commanded by General KNYPHAUSEN, and supported by the rangers under Colonel WEMYS, he scoured the ground so effectually that there was not a shot to annoy the column in its march. His merit on that occasion was acknowledged throughout the army, and fully stated in the reports of the day to the Commander-in-chief, by whose order the following letter was written to him by the Adjutant-general.

“ Head-quarters, 12th September 1777.

“ SIR,

“ The Commander-in-chief has received from
“ Lieutenant-general KNYPHAUSEN the most hon-
“ ourable report of your gallant and spirited be-
“ haviour in the engagement of the 11th, on which
“ his Excellency has commanded me to express his
“ acknowledgements to you, and to acquaint you,
“ Sir, that he shall with great satisfaction adopt any
“ plan that can be effected to put you in a situation
“ of remaining with the army under his command.

“ For the present, he has thought proper to in-
“ corporate the rifle corps into the light companies
of the respective regiments. I am very happy

“ to be even the channel of so honourable a tes-
 “ timony of your spirited conduct, and of that of
 “ your late corps. And I am, Sir, with perfect
 “ esteem and regard,

“ Your most obedient humble Servant,

(Signed) “ J. PATERSON, Adj. Genl.*”

“ Capt. Ferguson, }
 “ commanding
 “ the Rifle Corps.” }

His corps, though advanced immediately before, suffered considerably less than the rangers, from the advantage of being able, wherever they came under the enemy's fire, to use their arms as they lay on the ground. The rangers had seventeen

* It was well known in the army that the Commander-in-chief, Sir WILLIAM HOWE, had taken umbrage at the rifle corps having been formed without his being consulted. It was therefore perhaps not to be expected that he would exert himself to support it. The use of which it had proved, to the great satisfaction of the army, seems to have prevented him from taking active steps to its prejudice, until Captain FERGUSON was wounded at Brandywine; of which Sir WILLIAM took advantage, and reduced the corps without consulting him. It seems extraordinary, however, that Sir WILLIAM should have carried his chagrin so far as to take no notice, in his official letter to the Secretary of State, of the conduct of Captain FERGUSON, and of the behaviour of the rifle corps in the action of Brandywine, notwithstanding he had given him the public thanks stated above on the occasion. Upon that circumstance being discovered, when the London Gazette, containing Sir WILLIAM's official letter, arrived in America, Captain FERGUSON sent a copy of these thanks to the Secretary of State.

men killed, and FERGUSON's corps only two men wounded, of whom he himself was one.

While he lay with a part of his riflemen on the skirts of a wood, in the front of General KNYP-HAUSEN's division of the army, the following circumstances happened, which he relates in a letter to a friend: " We had not lain long," he says, " when a rebel officer, remarkable " by a hussar dress, passed towards our army, " within a hundred yards of my right flank, " not perceiving us. He was followed by another dressed in dark green, or blue, mounted " on a bay horse, with a remarkably large cock- " ed hat. I ordered three good shots to steal " near to them, and fire at them ; but the idea " disgusted me. I recalled the order. The hussar, in returning, made a circuit, but the other " passed again within a hundred yards of us, upon " which I advanced from the wood towards him. On " my calling, he stopped ; but, after looking at me, " proceeded. I again drew his attention, and made " signs to him to stop, levelling my piece at him, " but he slowly continued his way. As I was with- " in that distance at which, in the quickest firing, " I could have lodged half a dozen of balls in or " about him before he was out of my reach, I had " only to determine ; but it was not pleasant to fire

“ at the back of an inoffending individual, who
“ was acquitting himself very coolly of his duty; so
“ I let him alone. The day after I had been tel-
“ ling this story to some wounded officers who lay
“ in the same room with me, when one of our sur-
“ geons, who had been dressing the wounded rebel
“ officers, came in and told us they had been in-
“ forming him, that General WASHINGTON was all
“ the morning with the light troops, and only at-
“ tended by a French officer in a hussar dress, he
“ himself dressed and mounted in every point as
“ above described. I am not sorry that I did not
“ know at the time who it was.

“ Farther this deponent sayeth not, as his bones
“ were broke a few minutes after.” He received
a ball in his right arm, which so shattered the
joint of the elbow as to render it doubtful whether
amputation would not be necessary. He was for
some months disabled from service, and, although
he preserved his arm, never recovered the use of
that joint; but, with a spirit peculiar to himself,
so assiduously practised the use of the sword and of
the pen with his left, that he scarcely seemed to
have incurred any change but a difference in his
hand-writing. What mortified him most was, that
during his confinement the rifle corps, deprived of
its leader, was broke up, as mentioned in the above

letter from the Adjutant-general, the rifles lodged in the store of spare arms, and the men returned to their respective regiments.

As FERGUSON was now no more than a mere volunteer with the army, the regiment to which he belonged being stationed at Halifax in Nova Scotia, it was at the discretion of the Commander-in-chief whether he should be employed at all ; but every one concurred in favouring his pretensions, and in doing justice to his merit; and, what is uncommon, he shewed an ardour for distinction and eminence without exciting proportional envy. His brother officers ever mentioned him with esteem and kindness. One of them who kept a journal of the war, observed of FERGUSON, that, though careless of his own life to a fault, he was ever attentive to the means of preserving those under his command. Another who has had occasion to publish his eulogium to the world, among other expressions of esteem and regard, gives the following account of his character :

“ That in private life his humanity and bene-
“ volence were conspicuous, his friendship steady
“ and sincere. To a distinguished capacity for
“ planning the greatest designs, he added the ar-
“ dour necessary to carry them into execution ; his

“ talent for enterprize attracted the notice of the
“ whole army. Military tactics had been his early
“ and favourite study ; considered as a scholar, his
“ genius was solid, his comprehension clear, and
“ his erudition extensive. *”

FERGUSON was the friend of every man's merit, and had no enemy to his own. His being employed, though out of his turn, did not give offence to officers of the same rank with himself. In the autumn of 1778, he had the command of a detachment that embarked at New York, on board of a little squadron, consisting of the Zebra, the Vigilant, the Nautilus, some gallies and small armed vessels, under the command of Captain COLLINS of the Zebra. The troops under Captain FERGUSON amounted to three hundred ; and their instructions were to destroy a nest of rebel privateers which infested the trade of New York, from Little Egg harbour in the Jerseys. This small armament sailed from Sandyhook on the 30th of September, but, meeting with contrary winds, could not reach the port to which they were destined, though within half a day's sail, until the 5th October. During this interval the enemy, having had intelligence of their coming, put to sea with some of their larger vessels,

* MACKENZIE'S Strictures.

and removed others over the bar into shallow water. The latter, however, were burnt to the number of ten or twelve privateers, by Captain COLLINS, who got over the bar with his small craft, while the troops were employed in destroying their haunts and storehouses on shore.

While Captain COLLINS lay in the harbour waiting for fresh orders, in consequence of the report he had made to his commander at New York, intelligence was brought by an officer who deserted from the enemy, that POLASKI, an adventurer from Poland, and reported to be the same who had carried off the person of his Polish Majesty with many circumstances of audacity and cruelty, and now in the service of the American Congress, lay up the country with three companies of foot, three troops of horse, and a detachment of artillery; and that about a mile in his front, there was a gully, or creek, with a narrow bridge upon it, which he had neglected to occupy. This last circumstance encouraged Captain FERGUSON to hope that the enemy might be surprised, and, in any event, a retreat be secured by seizing the bridge. For this purpose he embarked with about two hundred and fifty of his detachment in boats, set off at eleven at night, and, after rowing about ten miles, landed at four in the morning within a mile of the pass which he was to

seize. He left fifty men for its defence, and advancing rapidly, surprized POLASKI before break of day, killed several officers, amongst whom were one lieutenant-colonel, one captain, one adjutant, and about fifty private men.*

* This little enterprise is thus detailed in the *London Gazette* of 1st December 1778.

“ *EXTRACT of a LETTER from General Sir HENRY CLINTON, Knight of the Bath, to Lord GEORGE GERMAINE, dated October 25, 1778.*

“ In my letter of the 8th inst. I mentioned that my move into Jersey was partly to favour an expedition sent to Egg harbour. I have now the honour to inclose copies of two reports made to me by Captain FERGUSON of the 70th regiment, who commanded the troops employed upon that service, to which I beg leave to refer your Lordship for an account of its success, under direction of that very active and zealous officer. *See Gazette for 1st Report of 10th October.*

“ *REPORT of Captain FERGUSON of the 70th Regiment, to his Excellency Sir HENRY CLINTON, dated Little Egg harbour, October 15, 1778.*

“ Sir,

“ Since the letter which I had the honour of writing to you on the 10th instant, Captain COLLINS has received a letter from Admiral GAMBIER, signifying that the Admiral and you are both of opinion, that it is not safe for us to remain here, as the army is withdrawn from the Jerseys, and ordering our immediate return; but as the wind still detained us, and we had information by a captain and six men of POLASKI's legion, who had deserted to us, that Mr POLASKI had cantoned his corps, consisting of three companies of foot, three troops of horse, a detachment of artillery, and one brass field-piece, within a mile of a bridge, which appeared to me easy to seize, and from thence to cover our retreat, I prevailed upon Captain COLLINS to enter into my design, and employ an idle day in an attempt that was to be made with safety, and with a probability of success. Accordingly, at eleven last night, 250 men were embarked, and, after rowing ten miles, landed at four this morning, within a mile of the defile, which

In the following spring, it was proposed to push the war from New York up the North River, and to dislodge the enemy from the posts of Stonypoint, and Ver Planks Neck, which they occupied upon that communication. When Sir HENRY CLINTON

we happily secured, and, leaving 50 men for its defence, pushed forward upon the infantry of this legion, cantoned in three different houses, who are almost entirely cut to pieces. We numbered among their dead about 50, and several officers, among whom, we learn, are a lieutenant-colonel, a captain, and an adjutant. It being a night attack, little quarter could of course be given, so that there are only five prisoners. As a rebel Colonel PROCTOR was within two miles, with a corps of artillery, two brass twelve-pounders, one three-pounder, and the militia of the country, I thought it hazardous with 200 men, without artillery or support, to attempt any thing farther, particularly after Admiral GAMBIER's letter.

“ The rebels attempted to harass us in our retreat, but with great modesty, so that we returned at our leisure, and reembarked in security.

“ The captain who has come over to us is a Frenchman, named BROMVILLE. He and the deserters inform us, that Mr POLASKI has, in public orders, lately directed no quarter to be given; and it was therefore with particular satisfaction that the detachment marched against a man, capable of issuing an order, so unworthy of a gentleman, and a soldier.

“ It is but justice to inform you, Sir, that the officers and men, both British and Provincials, on this occasion, behaved in a manner to do themselves honour.

“ To the conduct and spirit of Captain Cox, Lieutenant LYTTLETON, and Ensign COTTER, of the 50th regiment, and of Captain PETER CAMPBELL of the 3d Jersey Volunteers, this little enterprise owes much of its success, as well as to the arrangements of Captain COLLINS of the navy, and attention of Captain CHRISTIAN, who accompanied the embarkation.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) PAT. FERGUSON, Capt. 70th Reg.

P. S. The dispatch vessel not having got to sea last night, I am enabled to inform you, that our yesterday's loss consists of two men of the 5th, and one of

moved upon this service, Captain FERGUSON at the head of a detachment was advanced, as on former occasions, before the army, and became a busy actor in the operations that followed.

Stonypoint being surprised by a party of the king's troops, Ver Planks Neck was deserted, as no longer tenable under its exposure to the guns of the other. Colonel WEBSTER and Captain FERGUSON being stationed at Ver Planks, Stonypoint was again surprised, and recovered by the enemy, its guns turned upon Ver Planks, and a heavy fire continued from thence, and from a galley which the enemy had brought to bear upon it. This attack, however, was firmly sustained by Colonel WEBSTER, until the galley being sunk by a shot from his battery, Stonypoint was again retaken upon a second march of Sir Henry CLINTON to that quarter. It appearing that the facility with which this post had been so often taken and retaken, was

the Provincials missing, and two of the 5th slightly wounded; Ensign CAMPBELL of the 2d Jersey Volunteers has received a stab through the thigh.

“ We had an opportunity of destroying part of the baggage and equipage of POLASKI's legion, by burning their quarters; but, as the houses belonged to some inoffensive Quakers, who, I am afraid, may have sufficiently suffered already in the confusion of a night's scramble, I know, Sir, you will think with us, that the injury to be thereby done to the enemy, would not have compensated for the sufferings of these innocent people.

P. F.

owing to a defect in the works, the charge of reforming or supplying that defect was intrusted to FERGUSON,—an appointment unusual, as he did not belong to the corps of engineers, who nevertheless do not seem to have taken umbrage at it.

That FERGUSON, (who had by this time attained the rank of major,) might erect what works he thought proper, it was proposed that he should remain in the defence of the place. Flattered with this opportunity to execute what he had often been meditating, he proceeded to realize some of his favourite ideas ; and while he looked for an attack with all the anxiety of a person who waits the result of an interesting experiment, he had the mortification to receive an order to evacuate Stonypoint, and join the army at New York, now destined to carry the war into a different quarter of the continent. In a letter to a friend on that occasion, full of regret, he says, “ Never did a fond mother “ leave her favourite child with more reluctance “ than I did that place.” He had the consolation, however, of being promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-colonel in America, and the prospect of being employed with distinction in the operations which were then projected.

When the fleet and transports, with the army on board, were about to sail from Sandyhook, they had orders, in case of separation, to rendezvous at Tybee in the province of Georgia; at this place a small division of the army was put on shore, under the command of Major-general PATTISON of the Royal Artillery, with orders to penetrate into South Carolina, that the attention of the enemy might be directed to him, whilst the fleet again put to sea, and appearing suddenly before Charlestown, should land the army without opposition near that place.

Of the first division, FERGUSON, with a detachment of regulars, and Major COCHRANE, brother to the Earl of DUNDONALD, with some companies of the British Legion, made a part. These two officers were employed to reconoitre the country, clear it of enemies, and collect boats and waggons for the use of the main body that followed. In this service, they both co-operated with cordiality and spirit; and as in their fates,* at no great interval of time, they equally became objects of public and private regret, it is impossible for a person in doing

* Major COCHRANE having been sent, by Sir HENRY CLINTON, to apprise Lord CORNWALLIS of his approach, by courage and perseverance reached York-town with the intelligence, when he soon after had his head carried off by a canon-ball, while standing by his Lordship's side.

justice to the one, not to consider the other with like affection and esteem.

Fortunati ambo, si, quid mea carmina possunt ;

Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximit ævo. *

Having on this march from Georgia to South Carolina taken different routes, they had each of them intelligence of one MACPHERSON, who had assembled a body of rebels at his own plantation, nearly on that which the troops were to take on their march to Charlestown, and both at the same time formed a resolution to surprise this enemy. FERGUSON arrived first, and finding that MACPHERSON had abandoned the place, took possession of it. Major COCHRANE arriving soon after in the night, and supposing the enemy still to be there, instantly proceeded to force his way ; FERGUSON, as usual at the head of his men, opposed this attack, and attempting to parry a bayonet with his sword, received a thrust in the only arm of which he had any use ; but while he raised his voice, to encourage his men, he was known to his friend Major COCHRANE, who immediately put a stop to the conflict. FERGUSON called for the man who had wounded him, and giving him a piece of money, commended his alacrity,

* ÆN. Lib. IX. ver. 456.

saying, " We should have known our friends sooner
" from their mode of attack."

This wound for some time had an alarming appearance, and, under the effects of the climate, threatened him with the loss of his other arm. In this state of it, however, it was necessary for him to continue his march, and he rode between two orderly men who were appointed to attend him, while he himself, to have the command of his horse, was occasionally obliged to hold the reins of the bridle in his teeth.

In a little time after he joined the army near Charlestown his wound took a more favourable turn, and he was soon in condition to take the field with his former activity. He was employed with Colonel TARLETON during the siege of Charlestown, in clearing the country of parties of the enemy, who attempted to straiten the quarters of the army; and, while on this service, falling in with one of their convoys, he took two hundred horses, forty waggons, all their baggage, spare arms, and accoutrements, with fifty prisoners, without the loss of a man.*

* Letter dated Charlestown, 13th May 1780, Captain FLETCHER's M. S. account of Colonel FERGUSON.

After the reduction of Charlestown, among the dispositions which were made to restore and preserve the province, it was proposed that the well affected should be armed in their own defence ; and FERGUSON, who at this time held the rank of lieutenant-colonel in America, was appointed major to the 71st regiment, on the British establishment, and entrusted with the charge of marshalling the militia over a great extent of the country ; a service for which he was particularly qualified, by his generous disposition and conciliating manners.

In the proclamations he was intrusted to frame, the people of South Carolina were called upon by him to restore the civil government of their country, under the favourable conditions then offered by the King and Parliament of Great Britain.

A numerous militia was accordingly soon enrolled, being allowed to name officers for themselves ; and, as those officers were to act as civil magistrates also, a caveat was entered against the choice of any person who was likely to abuse his trust, by withholding from any peaceable citizen that protection to which he was entitled.

FERGUSON exercised his genius in devising a summary of the ordinary tactics, for the use of this militia; and had them divided in every district into two classes;—one, of the young men, the single and unmarried, who should be ready to join the King's troops, to repel any enemy that might infest the province;—another, of the aged and heads of families, who should be ready to unite in defending their own townships, habitations, and farms. In his progress among them he soon gained on their confidence, by the attention he paid to the interests of the well-affected, and by his humanity to the families of those who were in arms against him. “We come not,” he observed, “to make war on women and children,” giving them money to relieve their distresses; but said, “he hoped they would excuse him, if meeting with their husbands or brothers in the field, he should use them a little more roughly.”

Soon after the conduct of the war in that quarter had devolved upon Lord CORNWALLIS, a detachment of regulars, joined with a body of militia, under the command of Colonel FERGUSON, was destined to cover the interior country, and the left flank of Lord CORNWALLIS's army on its march towards North Carolina and Virginia.

Having advanced towards Ninety-six, about two hundred miles from Charlestown, acting with vigour and success against different bodies of the rebels, who remained to dispute the possession of the country with him, he had intelligence from Colonel BROWN, who commanded the King's forces at Augusta in Georgia, that a body of rebels, under the command of a Colonel CLARKE, who had been recently repulsed in an attempt upon the post of Augusta, was retreating by the back settlements of Carolina. To this intelligence Colonel BROWN added, that he himself meant to hang on the rear of this enemy, and that if FERGUSON would cut across his route, he might be intercepted, and his party dispersed. As this service was perfectly consistent with that in which he was employed, FERGUSON gave way to his usual ardour, and pushed with his detachment, composed of a few regulars and militia, into Tryon county.

In the meantime, numerous bodies of back settlers west of the Alleghany mountains, hitherto believed favourable to the British cause, were in arms, some of them with a view of seizing upon the presents intended for the Creek and Cherokee Indians, which they understood were but slightly guarded at Augusta. Others had assembled upon the alarm of enemies likely to visit them from South

Carolina. These meeting with Colonel CLARKE secured his retreat, and made it expedient for BROWN to discontinue his pursuit and return to his station at Augusta, while FERGUSON having no intelligence of that event, still continued the march undertaken at his request. The enemy which he now alone and unsupported was likely to encounter, is described as follows by an officer who served the campaign in South Carolina: "A swarm of back-wood's men, the wild and fierce inhabitants of Kentucky, and other settlements westward of the mountains, under the Colonels CAMPBELL and BOON, with those of HELSTON, POWELS VALLY, BARCLAY, BOTTETOURT, AUGUSTA, and FINCASTLE, under the Colonels CLEVELAND, SHELBY, SIVIER, WILLIAMS, BRAND, and LACY," had assembled suddenly and silently upon the report of a booty to be seized at Augusta. They were mounted on horseback, and by the rapidity of their motions well qualified to act by surprise.*

When FERGUSON had intelligence of BROWN's retreat, and the appearance of a new enemy, he halted, with a view of returning to the parts of the country he had left. At the same time, he dispatched a messenger to Lord CORNWALLIS, to inform

* Vide RAMSAY'S *Revolution of America*, chap. 19.

his Lordship of what had passed,—of the enemies he had to deal with,—and of the route he had taken to avoid them ; earnestly expressing his wish, that he might be enabled to cover a country in which there were so many well affected inhabitants ; adding, that for this purpose he should halt at King's Mountain, hoping that he might be there supported by a detachment from his Lordship, and saved the necessity of any further retreat.

This letter having been intercepted, gave notice to the enemy of the place where FERGUSON was to be found ; and though a duplicate sent on the following day was received by Lord CORNWALLIS, it came too late to prevent the disaster which followed.

The enemy having selected a body of chosen men, mounted on fleet horses, performed their march sooner than otherways could have been accomplished. They were in number so superior to FERGUSON's detachment, and so well acquainted with all the approaches to his position, that they made arrangements to surround him and to cut off his retreat.

On this sudden emergence FERGUSON's detachment was immediately in arms, and rushing with the bayonet on the first body of the enemy that

presented themselves, forced them to retire ; but while they gained this advantage in front, they were attacked on the flanks by a fresh enemy. To these also the regulars presented their bayonets, and repulsed the enemy in three several attacks. “ As often as one of the American parties was “ driven back,” says RAMSAY, the American historian, “ another returned to their station. Resistance on the part of Colonel FERGUSON was in “ vain ; but his unconquerable spirit refused to “ surrender. After having repulsed a succession “ of adversaries pouring in their fire from new directions, this distinguished officer received a mortal wound.”

He had two horses killed under him, while he remained untouched himself ; but he afterwards received a number of wounds, of which it is said any one was mortal, and, dropping from his horse, expired, while his foot yet hung in the stirrup.

The spirit which thus refused to be subdued, being now no more, the officer on whom the command devolved, though brave and equal to the trust, was compelled to accept of quarter for himself and the few men that remained under his command.

The first reports of FERGUSON'S death, though vague and uncertain, were received by his friends in the army as a matter to be hourly expected : “ If not now,” they said, “ it must be soon, in the continual danger to which he exposes himself.”

He had estimated the part which became him to act, as the leader of such parties as were hitherto put under his command : in such services, he conceived, that he was not only to project what should be done, but to lead in the execution of it. His courage was considerate and calm. He says, in a letter to a friend, “ I thank God more for this than for all his other blessings, that in every call of danger, or honour, I have felt myself collected, and equal to the occasion.” Anxious to reconcile his parents to the risks to which he was so frequently exposed, he makes the following observation : “ The length of our lives is not at our own command, however much the manner of them may be. If our Creator enable us to act the part of men of honour, and to conduct ourselves with spirit, probity, and humanity, the change to another world, whether now, or fifty years hence, will not be for the worse.”

Of the millions who were born on the same day or year with Colonel FERGUSON, the longest liver

will die at no great interval of time, and none in a manner more worthy of the part which Providence had assigned him to act.

The body lay stripped on the ground, while the men lately under his command, now prisoners of war, desired leave to bury his remains with what they termed the honours of a soldier's grave; but this request, addressed to the recent feelings of a ferocity which resented the opposition even of the most generous enemy, was refused. This token of respect and affection, however, was paid to the deceased, by the inhabitants of a neighbouring village, who, having experienced his humanity, gave the body a decent interment in their own burying-ground.

Having noted the respect and affection expressed for Colonel FERGUSON by his brother officers, in the epitaph prefixed to this memoir; the person who offers this imperfect sketch, hopes that he will be pardoned the ambition of erecting this monument also to his memory.

THE END.

OF many Poetical Effusions that appeared in the Public Prints on the death of Lieut.-Colonel FERGUSON, the following have been accidentally discovered since the foregoing Memoir was printed.

TO THE MEMORY OF

COLONEL PATRICK FERGUSON.

HERE Soldiers sighing o'er a Hero's grave,
Tell how he fought and died.—HERE Genius bends,
Mourning the Patriot worth she could not save,
While social Virtue weeps the best of Friends.

HERE bleeding Pity, viewing what is done,
In silent woe laments her darling Son;
For ne'er a milder Warrior thus was laid—
His generous breast no evil e'er repaid;
His heart no selfish passion ever felt,
For THERE the chastest love of glory dwelt.
His martial ardour tend'rest feelings crown'd,
And, but too daring, not a fault was found.
Let Honour pay the debt his actions claim;
Let Candour give to future time his Fame.
Let grateful Britain, to her children just,
With never-fading laurel shade his dust;
His gallant deeds her youthful Soldiers tell,
Teach them, like Him, in glory to excel:
For this he fought—For this, alas, he fell!

APPENDIX.

[FROM THE LONDON PAPERS.*]

Letter from Captain JOHN GOTTLIEB WRUCK, of the ship Anna and Jacobina, of Dantzick, to JOHN WILSON CROKER, Esq. Secretary to the Admiralty, London. Dated Peterhead, 6th Nov. 1811.

SIR,—I request you will be pleased to lay before the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the following statement, which I deem it incumbent upon me to give to them and to the world, in justice to the generous and great exertions of a British Captain and British seamen, in saving me and 27 of my crew and passengers from inevitable destruction in the late storm. On the 25th of October last, the ship Anna and Jacobina, of Dantzick, 600 tons burden, laden with wood and iron, of which I was commander, was overtaken with a tremendous hurricane on her voyage, in company with a large fleet from Gottenburgh, under the protection of a Bri-

* It is not the practice of the Admiralty to publish in the Gazette any Letters to their Secretary, except those written by the Officers of the Navy, or upon service.

tish convoy. The storm soon reduced the vessel to the greatest distress; all her rigging was either driven away by the violence of the tempest, or cut off to prevent foundering or dashing the ship to pieces; the pumps could not keep the water under; and after the severest labour to resist its advances, the ship became completely water-logged, while the hurricane continued with undiminished fury. In this situation we remained until the morning of the 27th, our provisions and fresh water all destroyed or inaccessible, and we ourselves benumbed and worn out with toil. We expected every moment would have been our last; but at eight o'clock that morning, (Buchanness bearing N. W. and by N. at the distance of about 230 miles from us,) we saw an armed ship, to which we made a signal of distress, and it was not made in vain; the sea was so rough that there could not be any communication from her to us, but the stranger ship hovered near us the whole of the 27th, in the course of which she put out a boat with a line, with the view of letting it drift against my ship and be the means of saving our lives; the boat, however, drifted a great way from us, and this expedient failed. Reduced almost to despair, about two o'clock that afternoon, I and my crew resolved to make an attempt to save our lives, and got out our boat, into which a trunk containing

some cloths and valuables was put ; fifteen of the ship's company went into the boat, and with great difficulty reached the ship of war. In their haste to save their lives and get out of the boat she was allowed to drift with every thing which had been put on board, so that a fresh crew from the stranger, which I and the others who remained on the wreck requested to be sent to our assistance, could not return in it. We afterwards tried to launch our great boat, but she was staved to pieces by the breakers on the ship, and we were thus left without the means, and almost without the hope of being saved. Night came on ; our only food was pease, soaked with salt water. We passed the night in the deepest distress, but the stranger never left us ; and, at nine o'clock next morning, sent a boat with an officer, a boatswain, and twelve men, who picked us from the wreck with boat-hooks, ropes, &c. and carried us on board of their ship, which we found to be the *Pylades*, Captain GEORGE FERGUSON, who, after struggling through the tempest till the 4th November, landed us in safety at this port. We received from him and his men every kindness which our destitute condition required. We were supplied with linens and various kinds of clothes, of which we stood in great need ; and every comfort in his power to bestow was conferred with a liberal heart and an unsparing hand.

I cannot do justice to my emotions of gratitude, when I reflect on the great personal exertions of Captain FERGUSON, and the brotherly kindness of him and his crew, in saving me and two of my sons, and twenty-four others of my countrymen from perishing. I must leave their meritorious conduct to receive its highest reward, the approbation of the Lords of the Admiralty, the warm applauses of their country, and the consciousness which they must ever feel of saving and comforting fellow creatures and strangers in distress.—I have the honour to be, Sir, &c.

THE END.

